



For Immediate Release
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**Broad Coalition of Civic and Education Leaders Forms StudentsFirstNY
to Achieve Dramatic, Positive Change for New York's Public School Students**

April 4, 2011 (New York) – Responding to growing calls from advocates, educators and parents from across the state, StudentsFirstNY today announced the launch of its efforts to mobilize the supermajority of New Yorkers who support the change necessary to dramatically improve our public schools.

Already 100,000 members strong in New York, StudentsFirstNY will organize parents, students, teachers and concerned citizens to play an active role in the education debate at the State and local level. And with a board of nationally recognized educational trailblazers and political and philanthropic leaders, the organization is poised to build on successful reform efforts in recent years and galvanize a grassroots movement for better educational opportunities.

“New York State and New York City are at a crossroads in the journey for quality schools – and our kids can’t afford to wait any longer for change that puts their interests, not the special interests, first,” said StudentsFirst Founder and CEO Michelle Rhee. “We believe in the power of public education to change students’ lives, but right now, too many of our kids are failed by a broken status quo. Our fight is their fight.”

The StudentsFirstNY Board includes: Paul Tudor Jones (Chairman and CEO, Tudor Investment Corporation and Founder of the Robin Hood Foundation); Peter D. Kiernan (Chairman and CEO, Kiernan Ventures); Joel I. Klein (Executive Vice President, News Corporation and fm. Chancellor of the NYC Department of Education); Hon. Edward I. Koch (Partner, Bryan Cave LLP and fm. NYC Mayor); Kenneth G. Langone (Chairman, President and CEO, Invemed Associates, Inc.); Daniel S. Loeb (Founder and CEO, Third Point LLC); Rafael Mayer (Managing Partner, Khronos LLC); Eva S. Moskowitz (Founder and Chief Executive, Success Charter Network, and fm. NYC Councilmember); Lisette Nieves (Professor at Brooklyn College and founder of Year Up NY); Michelle A. Rhee (Founder and CEO, StudentsFirst); Dan Senor (Senior Advisor, Elliott Management and Adjunct Senior Fellow for Middle East Studies, Council on Foreign Relations); Douglas Band (Counselor to President Clinton and Co-CEO, Teneo); and Jane Viau (New York State Teacher of the Year 2009-2010).

“The fight for education reform begins with parents who demand better schools for their children,” said former New York City Schools Chancellor and StudentsFirstNY Board Chair Joel Klein. “We will give voice to the overwhelming majority of parents who aren’t satisfied with the status quo and won’t rest until they get something better.”

StudentsFirst has already driven change across the nation. The organization’s more than one million members have achieved more than fifty policy reforms in eight states that educate roughly ten million students. StudentsFirst’s advocacy has led to the expansion of high-performing charter schools, the establishment of merit-pay systems to reward great teachers and the end of laws mandating seniority-based layoffs.

“I know from my own experience that the caliber of the individuals who stand in front of the classroom is the key ingredient when it comes to the success of students,” said StudentsFirstNY Board member Jane Viau, who taught for nine years at the Frederick Douglas Academy and was named New York State Teacher of the Year in 2009-2010, and now teaches algebra and Advanced Placement Statistics at KIPP NYC College Preparatory High School. “We want to ensure every child has a great teacher.”

To lead the StudentsFirstNY effort, the board has tapped Micah Lasher, currently the City of New York’s Legislative Director in Albany, who will depart City Hall to become the organization’s Executive Director.

“We can and must do better for New York’s kids, and millions of New Yorkers know, first-hand, the kind of change we need,” said Lasher, who, before becoming the City’s Legislative Director, served as Executive Director of External Affairs for the NYC Department of Education. “Our mission is to galvanize scores of parents and citizens across the State so that our leaders make the changes we need to deliver on the great promise of public education.”

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